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# Foreword

This is timely – as was Volume 1. ReReadings 1 emerged over ten years ago in 2004 and quickly made its mark as a perceptive and intelligent review of how the skill of putting buildings to reuse was becoming – at last – a field of work worthy of separate study, separate from architecture and separate from interior design. A wide trawl found examples of then current projects covering the full breadth of options, from the familiar to the unexpected, from the gentle to the radical, from the ponderous to the quirky. These were used as case studies that collectively were to demonstrate that the separation from architecture was legitimate and useful, and that it was ready for analysis within its own terms of reference. It had come of age and recognised.

And so with ReReadings 2. Fourteen years on, the case is even stronger as we re-evaluate our built environment differently – more critically and more carefully. Now we hesitate before ripping down what's there before we start work, assuming that it has nothing to tell us and no value; we are able to recognise that the creative minds that were there before us on our site - with their constraints, struggles and flashes of brilliance, could be a seed bank; if examined with care, they have the potential to bring forth new life. So instead of scraping those away as kitchen debris, the existing, with all its baggage, problems and costs, is valued as the probable route to something interesting and useful rather than of an impediment to kick out of the way. This is probably not a sign of humility; more likely a sign that we are less confident that the less-than-brilliant single voice is the noise we want to have ringing in our ears and dazzling our eyes.

How much the world has changed in 10 years; our place in it feels slippery underfoot, nothing is clear and trust is hard. We are asked to accept change at a speed that is outside of our normal human rhythm and our techniques for dealing with this is to toss off the flamboyant new that fills the flashy competitive city, after an initial opening of the eyes, with a self-protective shrug. Instead we are increasingly finding comfort in a form of new that subtly emerges from the old and is able to hold some of its re-evaluated qualities. It is a new that bears revisiting, with the knowledge that there is a fine banquet of ideas for us there should we want it. It offers us some purchase points, clefts to hang on to, memories to relive and a sense of continuity.



**Figure 0.1**  
Neues Museum, Berlin.  
David Chipperfield  
Architects, 2009.

This valuable book is not a handbook, but is an extension of the atelier method of learning – about listening, looking and considering. No circumstances are ever the same, particularly at this level of complexity involving time, place, context, use, history..., but there is much to learn. This is not theory outside of practice, or philosophy outside of reality; instead this is 'what can we learn from this – and this, and this?' This time the authors have wandered even further on our behalf, gathering examples from all over the world creating a portfolio of over 70 projects. It reveals how all places, and citizens, are confronted by the same problems and the strategies to approach them – the tactics – are understandably similar, but nonetheless site and culture specific and cannot be

universal. This has enabled an unforced process of categorisation, placing the range of approaches into a form of taxonomy that carries convincing weight.

**Figure 0.2**  
**Neues Museum, Berlin.**  
**David Chipperfield**  
**Architects, 2009.**



The results of re-use have inevitably become a recognisable and aspirational style for architects and interior designers – and indeed clients; an apparently easy-to-copy-look that can be draped over the banal. A chaos style has emerged – fragmented, eclectic, deliberately eccentric, made from clashing materials, textures and ideas, it has tended to coarsen what is essentially a delicate process of reading, and re-reading. Used as a device for reducing bulk, curtailing impact,

disguising the big gesture, we see it everywhere as it has fanned out from the bars of Shoreditch, Sydney and New York, through to the suburban commercial developments that surround our cities. But as this book shows us, re-use is not a style that can be slapped on as a veneer. It is a way of thinking intelligently about how the past can inform the present as a gift to the future. Re-use projects do not conform to the expected; they can be delicate, witty, dramatic, literate, theatrical, soft or hard. Most designers, and most architects, perform better when there are restraints wrapped tightly around a project – whether they be financial, dimensional, political, functional or emotional – and here they often structural and historical as well. And since the restraints are always particular, the results are not a library of options to be plundered; there is no unifying clip-on style for the lazy. But for those who seek to learn by examining the different ways of approaching this rich seam, the examples in this book are all worthy of consideration and serious study; the lessons will be rewarding.

– Dinah Casson, January 2018

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# Introduction

Most buildings are resilient. They can accommodate change, they can evolve, expand, contract; they can adapt as the needs and priorities of those who occupy them become different. It is feasible to remodel most buildings for a broad range of circumstances and it is possible for a building to have a number of different lives and achievable reincarnations. Places that are adaptable can generate associations with the past and with the future; they create interconnections through time and space. They retain a sense of their previous existence while also providing an opportunity for the next. They possess the mnemonic quality of the already there.

If it is seen as desirable to both retain and reuse the existing building stock, then these structures need to be transformed. Over the last generation, attitudes towards the existing building have radically changed. Collective memory and the desire for a sense of continuity with the past have meant that the built environment is now expected to have the quality of adaptability through time, problems and opportunities.

The way in which we live has radically also developed, and the need to 'belong' means that cultural constructions within the built environment are recognised as important: identification with a particular place and community is regarded as beneficial to health and wellbeing. Places that already exist, that contain character and personality, are desirable. The juxtaposition of past and present can stimulate creativity and this can act as a catalyst for stimulation, growth and further development. The architect and interior designer can understand the needs of the new users and combine this with a thorough knowledge of the existing to create a new and appropriate environment that is easy to use. They can create order within the complication of a collection of

existing structures. They can rationalise the series of impediments and obstacles. They have the necessary understanding to create a new future for the building and those who occupy it.

It could be argued that the urban development strategies of the 20th century were primarily focused upon the removal of existing buildings in order to realise new space: a tabula rasa approach. The last 50 years have witnessed the advancement of place-making strategies. Heritage considerations have ensured that architects, designers, urbanists, landscape architects, and interiorists now prioritise the realisation of the potential differences within cityscapes, making difference and variation a key concern and a primary consideration in the approach to constructing cities, buildings and interior spaces: a tabula plena approach.

Adaptation and reuse is very much part of the wider debates about the sustainability of the urban environment. It is in line with one of the 21st-century grand- or meta-narratives. Global challenges, uncertainty about the future and the need to ensure a sustainable and productive future means that the adaptation of the existing building is seen to make a positive contribution to society and to the individual. Sustainability is a factor that was considered within *Rereadings* Volume 1, but has been given a much more important position, much greater prominence, within this second book. Care for the environment and the importance of lessening the wanton destruction of many characterful or precious situations is a social priority.

Volume 2 has also expanded the focus of the study to include more situations and even venture tentatively into urban design. The existing building has a direct relationship with its immediate environment,



**Figure 1.1** Olivetti Shop, Venice by Carlo Scarpa; a beautiful exploration of materials, form and context.

and any changes that are made to that building will have an effect upon the nature of the surrounding location. So for example, a simple shift in the position of the entrance can cause a dramatic change within the order of the urban surroundings. The architect and interior designer will need to be aware of the consequences of such moves and be prepared to act accordingly. Experimental creative arts practices have a role in shaping urban development practices. Artists who work directly with the existing environment can suggest methods of approach. The attitude of the installation artist – someone who is unencumbered by such factors as programme, drains and environmental control – might be to experiment with ideas that are too radical, inconvenient or costly for the designer. But these can act as precedents, exemplars or provide inspiration for the designer.

It is over a decade since the publication of Volume 1. This period of time has seen a significant and positive change in the attitude towards the reuse of existing buildings and the status of the adaptation

industry. This second volume is testament to that growing interest and the need for further clarification of the process of remodelling, adaptation and transformation of the existing built environment. It demonstrates the increased awareness of the sustainability agenda, and shows a definite emerging interest from non European-centric areas of the world in this type of work. The reuse of existing buildings can now be considered a mainstream subject rather than a phenomenon. It is an approach that prioritises an exploration of consuming less, exploiting more and utilising what is to be found. This attitude values what we already have over the relentless and gratuitous pursuit of something new.

Volume 1 in some small way contributed to this awakening of interest in the importance of the built environment: it very much caught the zeitgeist of that moment. A decade ago there were very few publications dedicated to the subject; indeed, there were just two that were worthy of recommendation. There are now numerous books dedicated to interior architecture, design, and decoration,

all of which advocate reuse as the basis for the principles and processes of reworking existing buildings: a testament to its growing popularity as a subject and as a field of study.

The industry is dramatically different from the one when Volume 1 was composed. Building reuse, adaptation and remodelling were still seen as secondary work, but a significant number of high profile projects along with this change in attitude have meant that they are now central to all construction. Often regarded as a less than radical area of the study in the built environment, preservation, restoration, conservation and rehabilitation are now considered to be of central concern within all discourse about the built environment. As the finite resources of the planet diminish, so the reworking of existing places and spaces are, and the prevailing attitude towards these spaces are also undergoing a transformation. This current interest and growth in popularity of the subject can be witnessed in the development of its award winning capabilities. The RIBA Stirling Prize has been won for the last four years by a reuse project. This is a UK-based award, but it is of international importance and is one of the few that recognises an individual building rather than a specific architect or designer, or a body of work.

This change in attitude can be illustrated by the story of Preston Bus Station. This building was discussed in Volume 1, and little hope was expressed for its rescue from demolition. This is an important Brutalist structure that plays a significant role within the collective memory of the residents of the city as well as having an important place within the history of architecture. The rescue of this building serves as an illustration of the change in attitude towards the existing built environment and the importance that this plays in forming the character of place. A series of events that celebrated the building were organised by many different interested

parties. The intention of these was to bring the plight of the structure to the attention of the local population, and also other sympathetic groups, such as architects and historians. These activities were sometimes very popular, at other times somewhat subversive, but in the end they were extremely effective. The campaign was successful, and the Bus Station has been granted a Grade II Listing by Historic England. This means that any redevelopment of the city has to consider the presence of a huge Modernist masterpiece at the heart of any proposal.

This was a fantastic example of people power, and testament to the importance that a particular building or place can have within the collective memory of a population. The adaptation of the existing is more popular, more prevalent, more desired; it has become an almost ubiquitous approach to the development and redevelopment of the built environment. Adaptation is now considered as a normal part of architectural practice. There is a well-developed appetite for the exploration and clarification of the processes of this type of work in the built environment. The architect or designer no longer considers the reuse project to be something strange within the collection of different types of assignments in the office portfolio. It is just another type of project to be addressed. Therefore, this publication should prove to be a much needed resource. A lot of practitioners have little experience of working with an existing structure and Rereadings 2 aids the understanding and production of this process. This discussion of the methods of approach is explored through a collection of inspirational case studies. However, it is still not a subject that is well considered within schools of architecture. Interior architecture and design programmes discuss it at length and very well, but given that many architects carry out adaptation projects, it is a great omission that more time is not spent on the subject within academia.





**Figure 1.2** The marvellously Brutal Preston Bus Station was saved from demolition by active campaigning from local and national pressure groups.

## The Book

Rereadings Volume 2 reinforces and progresses the innovative ideas that were developed in Volume 1. The structure of the original book has been retained, but the outlook is considerably more international. Volume 2 is populated with examples of adaptation drawn from around the world. There is a growing popularity for the type of building or interior that has a direct connection with the society or culture that it is situated within. This awareness of the individual, the ethnicity and the people of a particular location means that there is also a desire to retain much of the culture that has evolved there. The global range of the projects illustrating the process of adaptation shows how reuse is being considered a viable alternative to new-build architectural approaches across the world.

Volume 2 is organised in almost exactly the same manner as Volume 1. This is a highly original and very effective system for showing the adaptation process and it clearly demonstrates the stages with carefully chosen precedents or case studies. This process-driven approach is still pertinent and appropriate; it follows the practical methods of thinking about reuse and underpins the approach to working with the existing situation. Thus the book is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters, Analysis, Strategy and Tactics, establish the design process for the remodelling of existing buildings. The last chapter contains six in-depth case studies. An important change is the inclusion of a significant section within the *Analysis* chapter dedicated entirely to sustainability. This subject was of course included in the first volume, and it could be argued that it is intrinsically part of every remodelling project, but it is important that this is fully demonstrated and discussed.

## Analysis

The form of the adaptation inevitably contains a direct relationship with the form of the original building. This seems obvious, but it does defy the Modernist aphorism of form following function. Within building reuse the physical presence of the new elements is completely dependent upon the actual size, shape and organisation of the old. Thus the form of the remodelled building follows the form of the original. It is therefore the responsibility of the designer or architect to fully understand the exact qualities of the existing situation before embarking upon the adaptation. Without an in-depth understanding of the unique qualities of the existing situation, it is impossible to create a coherent and comfortable remodelling. Analysis is divided into five sections; each approaches the existing building differently and discusses a particular, yet influential aspect.

The Form and Structure of the existing building are often the easiest aspects to understand. How does the building stand up? Has it a distinct rhythm or order and what are the relationships between the rooms and spaces like? The Historical and Functional factors can sometimes be more elusive, of course: what the building was used for and what had happened to it are very important, but how can that influence the outcome of the redesign? The analysis of the Context and Environment of the existing building establish relationships between the site, its neighbours and occasionally things further away and also discusses the influence that climate can have upon the adaptation. Without an understanding of the requirements of the Proposed Function, it is difficult to appreciate whether a relationship with the original building can be established. Sustainability is a subject that is at the heart of reuse. It is an extremely carbon-friendly approach to reuse a structure. This can be supplemented by the attitude of the designer, who can also choose to carry out the works in a sustainable



manner, and design the building in such a way that it is occupied in an environmentally responsible way.

## Strategy

This chapter concentrates on the plan of action for the overall situation of the adaptation. It discusses the formation of the basic relationship that is established between the original building and the new elements of the adaptation. The approach or the plan for the building is influenced or based upon the factors discovered within the analysis of the original situation. This strategic rapport can be catalogued into three general classifications. There will always be other approaches, but almost all remodelling projects can be placed within this taxonomy. The three types of strategy are classified according to the degree of intimacy of the relationship between the old and the new.

If the existing building is so transformed that it can no longer viably exist independently and the nature of the remodelling is such that the old and new are completely intertwined, then the category is intervention. If a new autonomous element is placed into the confines of the existing, and its dimensions completely dictated by it (that is, the new element is built to fit), then the category is insertion. The final classification, that of installation, discusses examples in which the old and the new exist independently. The new elements are placed within the boundaries of the building, the design or the grouping of these elements may be influenced by the existing, but the fit is not exact and should the elements be removed, then the building would revert to its original state.

## Tactics

This chapter concentrates on the individual elements or details of the design. It looks at

the carefully planned methods by which the strategy is realised. The tactics are the distinct and discrete systems of organisation that together form the completeness of the building. The individual tactics or elements that make up the building are always different; each remodelling project calls for a different solution, and so the elements that constitute that remodelling will therefore be completely individual. These tactics express the very qualities of the building, what it looks like, how it sounds, and what it feels like. So for example, a strategically placed wall can manifest itself in many different ways: the materials that it is made from would depend upon its situation, its use is distinct and therefore the appearance is always specific and individual. There are six categories of tactics introduced in this chapter; each section discusses a different type of tactical element and how it has been deployed.

Planes are normally either horizontal or vertical and can be used to organise and separate space. The category is subdivided into the wall, the floor, the façade and the soffit. Object discusses elements such as furniture or larger scale things that can provide a focus or a rhythm to a space. The articulation of Light, and the effect of both natural and artificial, can radically transform a building. Surface is the use of specific materials to confer identity and meaning. Movement refers to circulation and Opening describes how physical and visual relationships can be established between places and things.

## Case Studies

The final chapter is dedicated to the in-depth analysis of six significant examples of remodelled buildings. The principles discussed within the earlier chapters are applied to each of them and



**Figure 1.3** Kolumba Museum, Cologne by Peter Zumthor. Within the basement, the sharp contrast between the ruined church and the new elements of the museum are particularly apparent.

the analysis and explanation will confirm the reputation of both the buildings and their originators.

Rereadings Volume 2 proposes that the form of the resultant building is based upon the form of the existing building and that there is an inextricable connection between the two. It looks at methods of approach to building reuse, that is, the adaptation and interpretation of the existing from a theoretical point of view. This has led to new ways of examining and cataloguing the historic urban environment and has had an influence upon the manner in which the construction industry engages with the existing built environment. Volume 2 reiterates and enlarges upon the progressive approach that was introduced in the first book. It uses the same effective format to structure and organise the book, thus strengthening and enlarging upon the theories that were introduced and developed in Rereadings Volume 1.

There is an obvious and increased interest in the sustainability and heritage agenda and emerging interest from non European-centric areas of the world in this type of work. This has ensured that the remodelling of existing buildings is now perceived as a very sustainable and viable alternative to the construction of new-build architecture.